

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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COBBETT'S ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

SECOND EDITION.

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LETTER I.

TO

THE PEOPLE OF BOTLEY.

*On various matters, and especially on the conduct and character of the Hampshire Parsons, and particularly on those of their own Parson, Baker.*

*North Hampstead, Long Island,  
10, Nov. 1818.*

MY OLD NEIGHBOURS,

Great as the distance between you and me is, I very often think of you; and especially when I buy salt, which our Neighbour Warner used to sell us for 19s. a bushel, and which I buy here for 2s. 6d. This salt is made, you know, down somewhere

by Hamble. This very salt, when brought here from England, has all the charges of freight, insurance, wharfage, storage, to pay. It pays besides, one-third of its value in duty to the American Government before it be landed here. Then, you will observe, there is the *profit* of the American Salt Merchant; and then that of the shop-keeper who sells me the salt. And, after all this, I buy that very Hampshire salt for 2s. 6d. a bushel, English measure. What a government, then, must that of the Borough-mongers be! The salt is a gift of God. It is thrown on the shore. And yet, these tyrants will not suffer us to use it, until we have paid *them* 15s. a bushel for liberty to use it. They will not suffer us to use the salt, which God has sent us, until we have given them 15s. a bushel for them to bestow on themselves, on their families and dependents, in the payment of the interest of the Debt, which they have contracted, and in paying those, whom they hire to shoot at us. Yes; England is a fine country; it is a glorious country; it contains an ingenious, industrious,

a brave and warm-hearted people; but, it is now disgraced and enslaved: it is trodden down by these tyrants; and we must free it. We cannot and we will not live and die their slaves.

Salt is only one of the many English articles that we buy cheaper here than in England. *Glass*, for instance, we buy for half the price that you buy it. The reason is, that you are compelled to pay a *heavy tax*, which is not paid by us for that same glass. It is the same as to almost every thing that comes from England. You are compelled to pay the Boroughmongers a heavy tax on your *candles* and *soap*. You dare not *make* candles and soap, though you have the fat and the ashes in abundance. If you attempt to do this, you are taken up and imprisoned; and, if you resist, Soldiers are brought to shoot you. This is *freedom*, is it? Now, we, *here*, make our own candles and soap. Farmers sometimes *sell* soap and candles; but they never *buy* any. A labouring man, or a mechanic, buys a sheep now and then. Three or four day's work will buy a labourer a sheep to

weigh sixty pounds, with seven or eight pounds of loose fat. The meat keeps very well, in winter, for a long time. The wool makes stockings. And the loose fat, is made into candles and soap. The year before I left Hampshire, a poor woman at Holly Hill had *dipped* some *rushes* in grease to use instead of candles. An Exciseman found it out; went and ransacked her house; and told her, that, if the rushes had had *another dip*, they would have been *candles*, and she must have gone to jail! Why, my friends, if such a thing were told here, nobody would believe it. The Americans could not bring their minds to believe, that Englishmen would submit to such atrocious, such degrading tyranny.

I have had living with me an English labourer. He smokes tobacco; and he tells me, that he can buy as much tobacco here for *three cents*; that is about *three English half-pence*, as he could buy in England for *three shillings*. The *leather* has no *tax* on it here; so that, though the shoe-maker is paid a high price for his labour, the labouring man gets his shoes very cheap. In short,



there is no *excise* here; no *property tax*; no *assessed taxes*. We have no such men here as Chiddel and Billy Tovey to come and take our money from us. No window peepers. No spies to keep a look-out as to our carriages and horses and dogs. Our dogs that came from Botley now run about free from the spying of tax-gatherers. We may wear hair powder if we like without paying for it, and a boy in our houses may whet our knives without our paying two pounds a year for it.

But, then, we have not the honour of being covered over with the dust, kicked up by the horses and raised by the carriage wheels of such men as Old GEORGE ROSE and Old GARNIER, each of whom has pocketed more than *three hundred thousand pounds* of the public, that is to say, the people's, money. There are no such men here. Those who receive public money here, do something for it. They *earn* it. They are no richer than other people. The *Judges* here are plain-dressed men. They go about with no sort of parade. They are dressed, on the Bench, like other men.

The lawyers the same. Here are no black gowns and scarlet gowns and big foolish-looking wigs. Yet, in the whole world, there is not so well-behaved, so orderly, so steady a people; a people so *obedient to the law*. But, it is *the law only* that they will *bow* to. They will bow to nothing else. And, they bow with reverence to the law, because they know it to be just, and because it is made by men; whom they have all had a hand in choosing.

And, then, think of the *tithes*! I have talked to several farmers here about the tithes in England; and, they *laugh*. They sometimes almost make me angry; for they seem, at last, not to believe what I say, when I tell them, that the English farmer gives, and is compelled to give, the Parson a tenth part of his whole crop, and of his fruit and milk and eggs and calves and lambs and pigs and wool and honey. They cannot believe this. They treat it as a sort of *romance*. I sometimes (God forgive me!) almost wish them to be farmers in England. I said to a neighbour the other day, in half anger: "I wish your farm were at Botley. There

"is a fellow there, who would soon  
 "let you know, that your fine  
 "apple trees do not belong to you.  
 "He would have his nose in your  
 "sheep-fold, your calf-pens, your  
 "milk-pail, your sows' bed, if  
 "not in the sow herself. Your  
 "daughters would have no occa-  
 "sion to hunt out the hen's nests :  
 "he would do that for them."  
 And then I gave him a proof of an  
 English Parson's vigilance by tel-  
 ling him the story of Baker's peep-  
 ing out *the name*, marked on the  
 sack, which the old woman was  
 wearing as a petticoat. To another  
 of my neighbours, who is very proud  
 of the circumstance of his grand-  
 father having been an *Englishman*,  
 as, indeed, most of the Americans  
 are, who are descended from Eng-  
 lishmen; to this neighbour I was  
 telling the story about the poor  
 woman at Holly Hill, who had  
 nearly dipped her rushes once too  
 often. He is a very grave and re-  
 ligious man. He looked very se-  
 riously at me, and said, that *fals-*  
*hood* was *falshood*, whether in jest  
 or earnest. But, when I invited  
 him to come to my house, and told  
 him, that I would shew him the

acts which the Borough-villains had  
 made to put us in jail if we made  
 our own soap and candles, he was  
 quite astounded. "What!" said  
 he, "and is Old England really  
 "come to this! Is the land of our  
 "forefathers brought to this state  
 "of abject slavery! Well, Mr.  
 "Cobbett, I confess, that I was  
 "always for king George, during  
 "our Revolutionary war; but, I  
 "believe, all was for the best;  
 "for, if I had had my wishes, he  
 "might have treated us as he now  
 "treats the people of England."  
 "He," said I. "It is not *he*; he,  
 "poor man, does nothing to the  
 "people, and never has done any  
 "thing to the people. *He* has no  
 "power more than you have. None  
 "of his family have any. All put  
 "together, they have not a thou-  
 "sandth part so much as I have;  
 "for I am able, though here, to  
 "annoy our tyrants, to make them  
 "less easy than they would be;  
 "but, these tyrants care no more  
 "for the Royal Family than they  
 "do for so many posts or logs of  
 "wood." And then I explained  
 to him who and what the Borough-  
 mongers were, and how they op-



pressed us and the king too. I told him how they disposed of the Church Livings, and, in short, explained to him all their arts and all their cruelties. He was exceedingly shocked; but was glad, at any rate, to know the *truth*.

When I was, last winter, in the neighbourhood of Harrisburgh, in Pennsylvania, I saw some *Hop-Planters*. They grow prodigious quantities of hops. They are obliged to put their hills so wide apart, that they can have only four hundred hills upon an acre; and yet, they grow three thousand pounds of hops upon an acre, with no *manure*, and with once ploughing in the year. When I told them about the price of hops in England and about the difficulty of raising them, they were greatly surprized; but, what was their astonishment, when I told them about the hop poles of CHALCRAFT at Curbridge! The hop is, naturally a *weed* in England as well as in America. Two or three bines had come up out of Chalcraft's garden hedge, a few years ago. Chalcraft put poles to them; and, there might be a pound or two of hops on these

poles. Just before the time of gathering, one of the spies called *Excisemen*, called on Chalcraft and asked him why he did not *enter* his hops. Chalcraft stared; but answered, that he meant to *take them in* shortly, though he did not think they were yet quite ripe. "Aye," said the Exciseman, "but I mean, when do you mean to enter them at the *Excise Office*?" Chalcraft did not know (not living in a hop-country), that he had already incurred a *penalty* for not reporting to the tyrants, that he had hops growing in his garden hedge! He did not know, that he could not gather them and put them by without giving notice, under a *penalty of fifty pounds*! He did not know, that he could not receive this little gift of God without paying money to the Borough-mongers in the shape of tax; and, to the Parson in the shape of *tithe*, or, to give a tenth of the hops to the Parson, and not dare to pick a single hop till he had sent *notice to the Parson*! What he did, upon this occasion, I have forgotten; but, it is likely that he let the hops stand and rot, or cut them down and flung

them away as weeds. Now, poor men, in England, are told to be *content* with rags and hungry bellies, for that it is *their lot*; that "it has *pleased Divine Providence* to place "them in that state." But, here is a striking instance of the falsehood and blasphemy of this doctrine; for, Providence had sent Chalcraft the hops, and he had put poles to them. Providence had brought the hops to perfection; but then came the Boroughmongers and the Parson to take from the poor man this boon of a benevolent maker. What, did God order a tax, with all its vexatious regulations, to be imposed upon what he had freely given to this poor man? Did God ordain, that, in addition to this tax, a *tenth* should be yielded to a Parson, who had solemnly vowed at his ordination, that he believed himself called, not by the love of tithes, but by "the *Holy Ghost*, to take on him "the *care of souls*", and to "bring "stray sheep into the fold of the "Lord."? Did God ordain these things? Had it *pleased God* to do this? What impiety, what blasphemy, then, to ascribe to Provi-

dence the manifold sufferings occasioned by the Boroughmongers' taxes and the parsons' tithes.

But, my Botley neighbours, you will exclaim, "No tithes!--Why "then there can be no *Churches* "and no *Parsons*! The people "must know nothing of God or "Devil; and must all go to hell!" By no means, my friends. Here are plenty of churches. No less than three Episcopal (or English) Churches; three Presbyterian Churches; three Lutheran Churches; one or two Quaker Meeting Houses; and two Methodist Places; all within *six miles* of the spot where I am sitting. And, these, mind, not poor shabby Churches; but each of them larger and better built and far handsomer than Botley Church, with the Church-yards all kept in the neatest order, with a head-stone to almost every grave. As to the Quaker Meeting-House, it would take Botley Church into its belly, if you were first to knock off the steeple.

Oh, no! Tithes are not necessary to promote *religion*. When our Parsons, such as Baker, talk about



religion, or the church, being in danger; they mean, that the *tithes* are in danger. They mean, that they are in danger of being compelled to work for their bread. This is what they mean. You remember, that, at our last meeting at Winchester, they proposed for us to tell the Prince Regent, that we would *support the church*. I moved, to leave out the word *church*, and insert the word *tithes*; for, as there were many presbyterians and other dissenters present, they could not, with clear consciences, pledge themselves to support the *church*. This made them *furious*. It was lifting up the *mask*; and the parsons were enraged beyond measure.

Oh, no! *Tithes* do not mean religion. Religion means a reverence for God. And what has this to do with tithes? Why cannot you reverence God, without Baker and his wife and children eating up a tenth part of the corn and milk and eggs and lambs and pigs and calves that are produced in Botley parish? The Parsons, in this country, are supported by those who choose to employ them. A man

belongs to what congregation he pleases. He pays what is required by the rules of the congregation. And, if he thinks that it is not necessary for him to belong to any congregation, he pays nothing at all. And, the consequence is, that all is harmony and good neighbourhood. Here are no disputes about religion; or, if there be, they make no noise. Here is no ill-will on this account. A man is never asked what religion he is of, or whether he be of any religion at all. It is a matter that nobody interferes in. What need, therefore, is there of an *established* Church? What need is there of tithes? And, why should not that species of property be taken for *public use*? That is to say, as far as it has any thing to do with religion? I know very well, that tithes do not operate as many people pretend; I know that those who complain most about them have the least right to complain; but, for my present purpose, it is sufficient to show, that they have nothing to do with religion.

If, indeed, the Americans were a wicked, disorderly, criminal people,

and, of course, a miserable and foolish people: then we might doubt upon the subject: then we might possibly suppose, that their wickedness and misery arose, in some degree, at least, from the want of *Tithes*. But, the contrary is the fact. They are the most orderly, sensible, and least criminal people in the whole world. A common labouring man has the feelings of a man of honour; he never thinks of violating the laws; he crawls to nobody; he will call every man *Sir*, but he will call no man *master*. When he utters words of respect towards any one, they do not proceed from fear or hope, but from civility and sincerity. A native American labourer is never *rude* towards his employer, but he is never *cringing*.

However, the best proof of the inutility of an established Church is the absence of *crimes* in this country, compared to the state of England in that respect. There have not been three *felonies* tried in this county since I arrived in it. The Court-House is at two miles from me. An Irishman was tried for forgery in the summer of 1817, and the whole county was alive to go

and witness the novelty. I have not heard of a man being hanged in the whole of the United States since my arrival. The Boroughmongers, in answer to statements like these, say, that this is a *thinly inhabited* country. This very county is *more thickly settled than Hampshire*. The adjoining county, towards the city of New York, is much more thickly settled than Hampshire. New York itself contains nearly two hundred thousand inhabitants, and, after London, is the first commercial and maritime city in the world. Thousands of sailors, ship-carpenters, dock-yard people, car-men, draymen, boat-men, crowd its wharfs and quays. Yet, never do we hear of a hanging; scarcely ever of a robbery; men go to bed with scarcely locking their doors; and, never is there seen in those streets what is called, in England, a *girl of the town*; and, what is still more, never is there seen in those streets a *beggar*. I wish you, my old neighbours, could see this city of New York. Portsmouth and Gosport, taken together, are miserable holes compared to it. Man's imagination can paint nothing so beau-



tiful as its bay and port, from which two immense rivers sweep up on the sides of the point of land, on which the city is. These rivers are continually covered with vessels of various sizes bringing the produce of the land, while the bay is scarcely less covered with ships going in and out, to and from all parts of the world. The city itself is a scene of opulence and industry: riches without insolence, and labour without grudging.

What Englishman can contemplate this brilliant sight without feeling some little pride that this city bears an English name? But, thoughts of more importance ought to fill his mind. He ought to contrast the ease, the happiness, the absence of crime which prevail here with the incessant anxieties, the miseries and murderous works in England. In his search after causes, he will find them no where but in *the governments*; and, as to an established Church, if he find no sound argument to prove it to be an evil; at the very least he must conclude, that it is *not a good*; and, of course, that property to the amount of five millions a year is

very unjustly as well as unwisely bestowed on its Clergy.

Nor, let it be said, that the people here are of a better *natural* disposition than the people of England are. How can it be? They are, the far greater part of them, the immediate descendants of Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotsmen. Nay, the *city* of New York is, in a very great degree, inhabited by men actually *born* in those countries. It is supposed, that a full half of the labour is performed by natives of Ireland, while men of that Island make a great figure in trade, at the bar, and in all the various pursuits of life. They have their Romish Chapels there in great brilliancy; and they enjoy "*Catholic Emancipation*" without any petitioning or any wrangling. In short, blindfold an Englishman, and convey him to new York, unbind his eyes, and he will think himself in an English city. The same sort of Streets; shops precisely the same; the same beautiful and modest women crowding in and out of them; the same play-houses; the same men, same dress, same language: he will miss, by day, only

the nobility and beggars, and by night, only the street-walkers and pick-pockets. These are to be found only where there is an *established* Clergy, upheld by what is called the *State*, and which word means, in England, *the Borough-mongers*.

Away, then, my friends, with all cant about *the Church*, and the Church being *in danger*. If the Church, that is to say, the *tithes*, were completely *abolished*; if they, and all the immense property of the Church, were taken and applied to public use, there would not be a sermon or a prayer the less. Not only the Bible, but the very Prayer-Book is in use here as much as in England, and, I believe, a great deal more. Why give the five millions a year, then, to Parsons and their wives and children? Since the English, Irish and Scotch, are so good, so religious and so moral *here* without glebes and tithes; why not use those glebes and tithes for other purposes, since they are possessions, which can legally be disposed of in another manner?

But, the fact is, that it is the circumstance of the Church being

*established by law* that makes it *of little use* as to real religion, and as to morals, as far as they be connected with religion. Because, as we shall presently see, this establishment *forces* upon the people Parsons, whom they cannot respect; and whom, in many cases, they must, indeed, *despise*; and, it is easy to conceive, that the moral precepts of those, whom we despise on account of their immorality, we shall never much attend to, even supposing the precepts themselves to be good. If a precept be self-evidently good; if it be an obvious duty which the parson inculcates, the inculcation is useless to us; because, whenever it be wanted to guide us, it will occur without the suggestion of any one. And, if the precept be not self-evidently good, we shall never receive it as such from the lips of a man, whose character and life tell us we ought to suspect the truth of every thing he utters. When the matters as to which we are receiving instruction are, in their nature, wholly dissimilar to those as to which we have witnessed the conduct of the teacher, we may reason-



ably, in listening to the precept, disregard that conduct. Because, for instance, a man, though a very indifferent Christian, may be a most able soldier, seaman, physician, lawyer, or almost any thing else as far as professional art or science goes; and, what is more, may be honest and zealous in the discharge of his duty in any of these several capacities. But, when the conduct, which we have observed in the teacher, belongs to the same department of life as the precept which he is delivering, if the one differ from the other we cannot believe the teacher to be sincere, unless he, while he enforces his precept upon us, acknowledge his own misconduct. Suppose me, for instance, to be a great liar; as great a liar, if possible, as STEWART of the COURIER, who has said that I have been "fined 700 Dollars for writing against the American government," though I never was prosecuted in America in all my life. Suppose me to be as great a liar as STEWART, and that I were to be told by a Parson, whom I knew to be as great a liar as myself, that I should certainly go to

hell if I did not leave off lying. Would his words have any effect upon me? No: because I should conclude, that, if he thought what he said, he would not be such a liar himself. I should rely upon the parson generally, or I should not. If I did, I should think myself safe, until I out-lied him; and, if I did not rely on him generally, of what use would he be to me?

Thus, then, if men be *sincere* about religion; if it be not all a mere matter of form, it must always be of the greatest consequence, that the example of the teacher correspond with his teaching. And, the most likely way to insure this is, to manage things so that he may, in the first place, be selected by the people, and, in the second place, have no rewards in view other than those which are to be given in consequence of his perseverance in a line of good conduct.

And, thus it is with the Clergy in America, who are duly and amply rewarded for their diligence, and very justly respected for the piety, talent, and zeal, which they discover; but, who have no tenure

of their places other than that of the will of the congregation. Hence it rarely indeed happens, that there is seen amongst them an impious, an immoral, or a despicable man. Whether the teaching of even these Reverend persons have any very great effect in producing virtue and happiness amongst men is a question upon which men may, without deserving to be burnt alive, take the liberty to differ; especially since the world has constantly before its eyes a Society, who excel in all the Christian virtues; who practice that simplicity which others teach; who, in the great work of charity, really and truly hide from the left hand that which the right hand doeth; and who know nothing of Bishop, Priest, Deacon, or Teacher of any description. Yes, since we have the Quakers constantly before our eyes, we may, without deserving to be burnt alive, question the utility of paying any Parsons or religious Teachers at all. But, the worst of it is, we are apt to *confound* things. As we have, by a figure of speech, got to call a *building a church*, when a church really means a body of people; so

we are apt to look upon the priest *as being religion*, and especially when we call him *the Reverend*; and, it often sadly occurs that no two things can be wider from each other in their qualities. Some writer has said, that he would willingly leave to the Clergy every thing above the tops of the chimneys; which, perhaps, was making their possessions rather too ethereal; but, since our law calls them "*spiritual persons*;" since they profess, that "*their kingdom is not of this world*;" and, since those of our Church have solemnly declared that they believed themselves to be called to the ministry "*by the Holy Ghost*;" it is, I think, a little out of character for them to come poking and grubbing about after our eggs, potatoes and sucking pigs.

However, upon the general question of the utility or non-utility of paid religious teachers, let men, having the Quakers before their eyes, decide for themselves; but, if teachers be to be paid, it seems a clear point, in my mind, though I once, for want of experience, thought otherwise, that they should



be paid upon the American plan: and this, I think, must be obvious to every one, who is able to take a view of the English Clergy compared with those of America. Cures, in England, are appointed by the absolute will of the Boroughmongers. They care nothing for the good will of their congregation or parish. It is as good to them to be hated by their parishioners as to be loved by them. They very frequently never even see their parish more than once in four or five years. They solemnly declare at the altar, that they believe themselves called by the Holy Ghost to take on them the cure of souls; they get possession of a living; and leave the cure of souls to some *curate*, to whom they give a tenth part, perhaps, or much less, of the income. Many of them have *two livings*, at thirty miles distance from each other. They live at neither very frequently; and, when they do, they only add to the annoyance which their curate gives.

As to their general character and conduct; in what public transaction of pre-eminent scandal have they not taken a part? Who were

found most intimate with Mrs. CLARKE and most busy in her commission-dealing affairs? Clergymen of the Church of England. This is notorious. Miss TOKER tells of the *two livings* given to PARSON GURNEY for his *electioneering* works in Cornwall. And, indeed, all over the country, they have been and are the prime agents of the Boroughmongers. Recently they have been the tools of Sidmouth for gagging the press in the country parts of the kingdom. *Powis* and *Guillim* were the persecutors of Messrs. Pilling and Melor; and for which if they be not made to answer, the kingdom ought to be destroyed. They are the leading men at Pitt-Clubs all over the country; they were the foremost to defend the speculation of Melville. In short, there has been no public man guilty of an infamous act, of whom they have not taken the part; and no act of tyranny of which they have not been the eulogists and the principal instruments.

But, why do I attempt to describe Parsons to *Hampshire men*? You saw them all assembled in grand co-

hort the last time that I saw any of you. You saw them at *Winchester*, when they brought forward their lying Address to the Regent. You saw them on that day, and so did I; and in them I saw a band of more complete blackguards than I ever before saw in all my life. I then saw Parson B. of Exton, standing up in a chair and actually spitting into Lord Cochrane's poll while the latter was bending his neck out to speak. Lord Cochrane looked round and said, "Sir, if you do that again I'll knock you down." "You be d——d," said the Parson, "I'll spit where I like." Lord Cochrane struck at him; the parson jumped down, put his two hands to his mouth in a huntsman-like way, and cried "whoop! whoop!" till he was actually black in the face. One of them trampled upon my heel as I was speaking. I looked round, and begged him to leave off. "You be d——d," said he, "you d——d Jacobin." He then tried to press on me to stifle my voice, 'till I clapped my elbow into his ribs and made the "spiritual person" hiccup. There were about twenty of them, mounted upon a large table in the room; and there they jumped, stamped, hollowed, roared, thumped with canes and umbrellas, squalled, whistled, and made all sorts of noises. As Lord Cochrane and I were going back to London, he said, that, so many years as he had been in the navy, he never had seen a band of such complete blackguards. And I said the same for the army. And, I declare, that, in the whole course of my life, I have never seen any men, drunk or sober, behave in so infamous a manner. Mr. PHILLIPS, (now Doctor Phillips) of Eling, whom I saw standing in the room, I tapped on the shoulder, and asked, whether he was not ashamed of his ruffian-like brethren. He said nothing; but his looks said that he was ashamed. Mr. LEE of the College; Mr. OGLE of Bishop's Waltham; and Doctor HILL of Southampton: these were exceptions. Perhaps there might be some others; but, the *mass* was the most audacious, foul, and atrocious body of men I ever saw. We had done nothing to offend them. We had proposed nothing to offend them in the smallest degree. But, they were afraid of our *speeches*:



they knew they could not answer us; and they were resolved, that, if possible, we should not be heard.

There was one parson, who had his mouth within a foot of Lord Cochrane's ear, all the time his Lordship was speaking, and who kept on saying: "*You lie! You lie! You lie!*" "*You lie!*" As loud as he could utter the words.

BAKER, the Botley Parson, was extremely busy. He acted the part of buffoon to Lockhart. He kept capering about behind him, and really seemed like a Merry Andrew rather than a "*spiritual person.*"

Such is the character of the great body of Hampshire Parsons. I know of no body of men so despicable; and, yet, what sums of public money do they swallow! It now remains for me to speak more particularly of BAKER, he who, for your sins, I suppose, is fastened upon you as your Parson. But, what I have to say of this man must be the subject of another Letter. It is not Baker, however; it is the scandalous priest, that I strike at. It is the impudent, profligate, hardened priest, that I hold up to public scorn.

When I see the good and kind people here going to church to listen to some decent man of good moral character and of sober, quiet life, I always think of you. You are just the same sort of people as they are here; but, what a difference in the Clergymen! What a difference between the sober, sedate, friendly man who preaches to one of these congregations, and the greedy, chattering, backbiting, mischief-making, everlasting plague, that you go to hear, and are *compelled* to hear, or stay away from the church. Baker always puts me in mind of the *Magpie*.

The *Magpie*, bird of chatt'ring fame,  
Whose tongue and garb bespeak his name;  
The first, a *squalling, clam'rous clack*,  
The last made up of *white and black*;  
Feeder alike on *flesh and corn*,  
Greedy alike at *eve and morn*,  
Of all the birds the *prying pest*,  
Must needs be *Parson o'er the rest*.

Thus I began a fable, when I lived at Botley. I have forgotten the rest of it. It will please you to hear, that there are *no Magpies* in America; but, it will please you still more to hear, that no men that resemble them are parsons here.

I have sometimes been half tempted to believe, that the Magpie first suggested to tyrants the idea of having a tithe-eating Clergy. The Magpie devours the corn and grain; so does the Parson: the Magpie takes the wool from the sheeps' backs; so does the Parson: the Magpie devours alike the young animals and the eggs; so does the Parson: the Magpie's clack is everlastingly going; so is the Parson's: the Magpie repeats by rote words that are taught it; so does the Parson: the Magpie is always skipping and hopping about and peeping into others' nests; so is the Parson: the Magpie's colour is partly black and partly white; so is the Parson's: the Magpie's greediness, impudence,

and cruelty are proverbial; so are those of the Parson. I was saying to a farmer, the other day, that, if the Boroughmongers had a mind to ruin America, they would, another time, send over five or six good large flocks of Magpies, instead of five or six of their armies; but, upon second thoughts, they would do the thing far more effectually by sending over five or six flocks of their Parsons, and getting the people to receive them and cherish them as the *Bulwark of Religion*.

I am

Your sincere friend,

WM. COBBETT.

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